

CHRONICLE AND COMMENT OF THE STAGE

Putting the Gods Across at The Punch and Judy Theatre

By Ralph Block

Lord Dunsany is a poet, and it is a wrong thing to put other words and patterns into the design of a man whose work it is to weave them.

But Lord Dunsany talks of the gods and he means human beings; he speaks of fate, and distinctly in the background of his mind he is figuring the fates that he imbedded in human character. He is not always aware of his intention; he is too much the poet to be aware. To be able to see clearly, he must scarcely be conscious that he is seeing at all. To be a poet is like having a dream. To turn opened and searching eyes upon the tenuous fragment of reality that is involved in a dream is to dispel it—lose it utterly.

A philosopher tries to reduce life to a system; a poet sees how much it transcends all systems, all patterns, all schemes and constructions. There are not words enough in the world, nor phrases enough, nor ways of speech to seize and give articulation to all the intricacies and interwoven ways that the poet sees in living. To become expressive and impart his clear vision to others, the poet must make use of symbolism, and every possible way of meaning one thing more clearly by saying another.

Philosophers talk of life in terms of severe clarity. Dunsany in his plays of gods and men refuses explanation, but under the clear music of his language is a murmur of other meanings. A treading of other feet sounds vaguely beneath the rhythm of his sentences, full of implication and troubling intention.

Masterlinck has set the fashion for this kind of expression in the modern world, but Masterlinck only succeeded at it in his plays for marionettes. When he attempted to embody the powers that limit and decide human action in a larger form he failed of delicacy and defeated the earnestness of his purpose by the very conscious manner of his projection. He tried so hard to teach people to beware of the fates that after a while nobody would believe him.

Dunsany turns the method about; he starts out by discrediting the fates. But when they begin laughing off stage or their great stone boots come monotonously across the plains outside, there is something inevitable about them that Masterlinck never achieves. It is as if they existed terribly and finally against all protestation to the contrary.

"The laughter of the Gods," which Stuart Walker is presenting at the Punch and Judy Theatre, is quite typically this kind of a Dunsany play. For purposes of dramatic terror it does not contain such great and moving forces as "The Gods of the Mountain," which was presented by the Portman Theatre Players several years ago and is planned for early presentation again at the Punch and Judy. "The Gods of the Mountain" expands more deeply and widely into living; there is sweat in it, and dirt and misery and hunger—all these real terrors added to the shadows that lurk through every man's soul and dog his spirit. "The laughter of the Gods" deals more lightly with man, his vanities, his fantasies, his dreams of beauty. The king who moved his capital because the orchids were more profuse and of a deeper hue elsewhere, the lords and ladies who fired of the monarchy of mere beauty and signed for the rich confusion of their old home—these are but the shadows of ourselves or of the people we might somewhere once have been.

But the desperate beggars who play the parts of gods in their desperation, who gamble feverishly against the fates within and without them, these are truly ourselves, who are all of us in the dust trying by some strategy to flick some riches from the impossible order of things.

There is a difference in quality, but the method in both plays is the same. The existence of the gods

is scorned from the very start. Who believes in any gods nowadays? None does, and even in the days of the springtime of the gods there must have been skeptics and doubters beside Olympus. The beggars play the roles of gods half confident that really no gods exist. So the king at Thebes, in the midst of his purple orchids, says calmly there are no gods. The prophet who knew the gods could not lie had them denied to him many times, and the facile courtiers went to the last minute of their doom unbelieving. One beggar had a fear, the queen heard the sinister music of the god of death. But nobody would listen to them; they are the eternal embodiment of Cassandra. In both cases the gods punish swiftly and retire to their fastness. These are the retributions that men are always defying and inviting. It is easy to talk about the fates punting. It is the commonest kind of small talk. There is some magnificence about their images that centuries of enlightenment have not worn off. Yet it is not easy to deal with them in such a way as to make them real and related to immediate reality. Dunsany probably has seen that difficulty. It may be why he disclaims symbolism. He has succeeded in giving vigor to his poems. They have lines of deep irony for human beings, as when the king speaks to the prophet who has spoken falsely, saying, "If the gods have misled you, let the gods protect you from my executioner," and the first sentry, laughing, remarks in an aside to his companion, "Very witty."

What is important and valuable about Stuart Walker's presentation is his divination of Dunsany's real direction, his recognition of what is human as of greater importance in the plays than what is inhuman. They are called "Plays of Gods and Men." But from the human standpoint it must always be that the gods and the dooms these image exist for men—not men for the gods.

Where Do New York Theatre Audiences Come From?

Considered as a casual collection of persons impelled by a common desire for entertainment, but having no other reasons for close association, almost any night's audience at a popular Broadway playhouse stands forth as an assemblage remarkable for its cosmopolitan character. Tabulations made at the Globe Theatre during the last week show that "The Canary" has been witnessed literally by inhabitants of nearly every part of the civilized world. When signing the protest against the 20 cent theatre ticket tax those of the audience who are not residents of the city have registered their home addresses, and within six days the slips that have been returned to the box office to be forwarded to Washington have borne the names of more than 300 localities situated at an appreciable distance from New York. One performance was enjoyed equally by a gentleman from Peking, China, and his neighbor, who hailed from Austin, Tex. At the same time Paris and Panama were represented in the audience, while a man from Buenos Ayres sat in a box with another from Edmonton, Canada. Another night's list betrayed the whereabouts of a visitor from Melbourne, Australia, whose name followed that of a resident of Bangor, Me. Seattle, Fargo (N. D.), Vancouver, Montreal and a dozen names of Middle and Far Western communities of which the average New Yorker has not even heard, registered on the protest slips, turning illuminating information as to where New York audiences come from.

Miracle Play Revived

After 600 Years
To-night, at the Neighborhood Playhouse, Yvette Guilbert will appear in the fifth performance of "Anubis." The play will be repeated next Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The Roseland Girls at

The Columbia Theatre
The Roseland Girls, with the popular comedian, Solly Ward, at their head, will be at the Columbia Theatre tomorrow afternoon and present two one-act burlesques called, respectively, "Putting It Over" and "A Whirl of the Golden West."

AMUSEMENTS

CENTURY THEATRE. 62 N. B'way. 8:15
Sole Management MORRIS 3229
TO-NIGHT
MONSTER BENEFIT FOR
After Care Home For Crippled Children
ALL STAR BILL
ROY ATWELL, JULIETTE DAY, JOSEPH SATELY, IVY SAWYER, FRED GRAMHAM, "OH MY DEAR" CO., GORDON AND WILLIAM DOOLEY, ARINE CHASE, PAUL BAKER, RUTH BROS. CENTURY GROVE, VIVIANE SEGAL, HARRY C. BROWNE, CARL RANDALL, "OH LADY! LADY" CO., ANNA WHEATON, "OH BOY" CO., OSCAR SHAW, "LEAVE IT TO JANE" CO., LT. GIZ RICE, JACK HAZARD, Courtesy Klaw & Erlanger, JOHN STEELE, Courtesy WILLIAM ELLIOTT, JOSEPH SATELY AND GIRLS, "OH MY DEAR" CO., MALCOMB STRAUSS FAMOUS FASHION SHOW, ED WYNN (SOME TIME CO.) MASTER OF CEREMONIES



Sibyna Howland in "A Little Journey."

Ruth Donnelly and Ralph Sipperly in "A Prince There Was."

Vaudeville

PALACE. There are five star acts on this week's bill. Nance O'Neill will appear in a one-act comedy, "Come Out of the Kitchen." SHUBERT-RIVIERA—Oscar Wilde's "An Ideal Husband" is the attraction here.

LOEW'S SEVENTH AVENUE. The latest of the Potash and Perlmutter comedies, "Business Before Pleasure," is this week's play.

BRONX OPERA HOUSE. "Seven Days' Leave," the English melodrama, will be shown here.

At the One-Week Houses

STANDARD. Henry Miller will present A. E. Thomas's comedy, "Come Out of the Kitchen."

SHUBERT-RIVIERA. Oscar Wilde's "An Ideal Husband" is the attraction here.

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BROOKLYN

MAJESTIC. "Maytime," with Peggy Wood, William Morris and Melville Stokes, is this week's play.

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Plays and Players

Estelle Winwood, the featured player in Rachel Crothers's "A Little Journey," has won recognition from the American theatre-going public in two years. Just two seasons ago she made her first appearance at the Little Theatre in Winthrop Ames's production "Hush!"

Miss Winwood's experience on the English stage, before she came to America, has been particularly interesting. She became a leading woman at the age of sixteen, playing the exacting emotional roles of modern intellectual drama. She was Clara in Galway's "The Fugitive" and Effie Pemberton in "The Blindness of Virtue."

Then for several seasons she became a member of the Liverpool Repertory Company, which gave a wide repertoire of serious drama, ranging from Shakespeare to Ibsen. It was the favorable attention her work attracted for her that caused Mr. Ames to bring her over for his own production, since when she has established herself with American audiences.

Helen Menken, one of the youngest leading women on Broadway and the only girl in the cast of "Three Wise Fools," at the Criterion Theatre, emerged from obscurity at the age of six. Her debut with Annie Russell in "Midsummer Night's Dream" served to awaken an ambition that the years and several stock companies have not dimmed.

Helen did so well in Miss Russell's company that she was noticed by the stage director of "Humpty Dumpty," who cast her to play an oyster. At least Miss Menken thinks it was an oyster. Still, it might have been a clam. At any rate, when the curtain arose on the opening night, revealing twelve little girls in their shells, bathed in rosy light, the applause was quite deafening. Helen, thinking it was meant for her, left her shell, amiably sought the footlights and bowed graciously in acknowledgment.

Soon afterward Austin Strong, author of "Three Wise Fools," produced "The Pied Piper" with De Wolf Hopper. In the cast was a pretty little girl with dark curls whom he used to hold on his knee. During the rehearsals of "Three Wise Fools" Miss Menken, in a corner of the stage, hummed a little tune and danced about. Mr. Strong asked in astonishment where she had learned those steps, and both exclaimed in unison, "The Pied Piper!" Thus a thirteen-year-old gap was bridged.

After seasons with Eddie Foy and Adeline Genee Helen was sent to school in England for two years, and when she returned, at the awkward age of fourteen, she had to begin all over again. Vaudeville and stock companies gave an excellent training and prepared her for engagements with "Too Many Cooks," "Sinners," "Pendennis" and in the leading role in "Three Wise Fools."

Robert Mantell's performance, which I cannot, posture for praise, by watching him live times in the role.

Later Sipperly essayed Romeo, but the reviewer who loved him as Balthazar and laughed at him as Romeo.

But when he left school Sipperly became a baseball player, not an actor. He began on the Elmira team as first baseman, and for several seasons played in different parts of the country. He was a protégé of the late "Sik" O'Loughlin, manager, and was playing on the Binghamton team when he met with an accident that stopped his career as a ballplayer.

His then went on the stage. His performance has been divided between stock and vaudeville. Sipperly has played all the roles in the stock. This and his own personal experience have caused him to bring a thorough understanding of O'Connell's study to his role. This is his first Broadway appearance.

Ralph Sipperly, who makes a motion-picture actor one of the most amusing of O'Connell's types in the new O'Connell comedy, "A Prince There Was," at the George M. Cohan Theatre, is a former baseball player, not a screen actor, as might be supposed. In fact he has never appeared in the "movies," and his nearest approach to a detective role in the past was to follow Ned Sparks in "Nothing But Lies."

Sipperly's first part as an actor was at a high school entertainment in his home city, Rochester, N. Y. He played "Richard the Third." The local critics declared that the boy's performance was "inspired"—which Sipperly says was quite true—it was inspired by



AMUSEMENTS

EMPIRE. "Barrie at His Best," with Charles Frohman presents WILLIAM GILLETTE "DEAR BRUTUS."

HENRY MILLER'S THEATRE. "If you liked 'PEG' and 'BUNNY' and 'DADDY' and 'LONG-LEGS' you'll love PATRICIA COLLINGE in 'TILLIE'."

LIBERTY THEATRE. "The Marquis de Priola," by Henri Lavedan, with M. LEO DITRICHTER.

NEWAMSTERDAM THEATRE. "The Velvet Lady," a new musical comedy by Victor Herbert.

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BROOKLYN AMUSEMENTS

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FLORENCE NASH. IN "REMNANT" FROM THE MOROCCO, NEW YORK.

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The Menus, Hubert Present

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With PREY Wood, William Morris and Melville Stokes.
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James L. Crane

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1,000 ORCH. SEATS, \$1.00
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"Incomparable Belle Baker." Press
DRAMATIC FEATURE. EXTRAORDINARY
Celebrated Star of International Renown—One of the Really Great Women of the Current Stage.
Assisted by ALFRED HICKMAN and DODSON MITCHELL, in a brilliant, gripping comedy drama, "THE COMMON STANDARD."

FRISCO. Loretta McDermott
Pretty little stunner and vaudeville favorite, and DEBIT KELLY'S JAZZ BAND, the Original Five who made Jazz what it is today.

FRANCES KENNEDY. The Cheerful Comedienne.
HARRY LANGDON & CO. Assisted by Rose & Cecil.
BRADNA & DERRICK. Europe's Renowned Equestrians.
—AND—
DE LUXE ENGAGEMENT EXTRAORDINARY
Dancing Male Symphonies. Exquisite, Exhilarating by Glorious Girls Like Young Goddesses
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AMUSEMENTS

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Punch & Judy. STUART WALKER'S Lord Dunsany's "The LAUGHTER OF THE GODS."

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DAVID BELASCO Presents
FRANCES STARR
"TIGER! TIGER!"

Lyceum. 170 to 177 TIMES
DAVID BELASCO Presents
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JOHN CORTS NEWEST.
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COME OUT OF THE KITCHEN
BY THOMAS
8:15 in Title

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San Hardy, Doyle & Dixon, Maud Elaine
200 FIRST BALC. SEATS \$1.50

NO! But I saw it at the GLOBE
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